

**THE QUESTION OF REFORMS IN EASTERN ANATOLIA AFTER
THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN 1878-1885
(ANADOLU ISLAHATI)**

A THESIS PRESENTED BY H. ŞÜKRÜ ILICAK

TO

**THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY**

BİLKENT UNİVERSİY

SEPTEMBER, 1996

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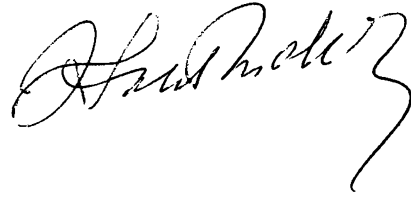
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ABSTRACT

THE QUESTION OF REFORMS IN EASTERN ANATOLIA AFTER THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN 1878-1885 (ANADOLU ISLAHATI)

For the period of 1878-1885, "*Anatolian Reform*" (Anadolu Islahatı) can be defined as the process of British efforts to make the Ottoman government introduce administrative reforms in its eastern provinces for the benefit of its Armenian subjects in order to prevent a possible Russian intervention in the region, which could endanger the British imperial route to India. The problem emerged and became an international issue after the Turco-Russian War of 1877 when the possibility of a further Russian advance threatened British communication with India after the Russian occupation of the eastern Anatolian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As the protection of this communication was a matter of vital importance, Britain did not hesitate to put forth its sustained efforts to keep the Armenians in peace, and forced the Ottoman government to initiate administrative reforms. The Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II considered British intervention a threat to the integrity of the country and resisted the provisions of the treaties which obliged the Porte to introduce reforms. After the Turco-Russian War of 1877, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its territories in the Balkans, hence, maintaining unity in Asia Minor became the foremost goal for the Ottoman administration.

ABSTRACT

BERLİN KONGRESİ SONRASINDA DOĞU ANADOLU'DA REFORM SORUNU (ANADOLU ISLAHATI)

1878-1885 dönemi için *Anadolu Islahatı*, 93 Harbi'nde Osmanlı devletinin doğu vilayetlerini ele geçiren Rusya'nın daha fazla ilerleyerek İngiltere'nin Hindistan yolunu tehlikeye sokmasıyla, bölgeye olası bir Rus müdahalesini engellemek için, İngiltere hükümetinin, Osmanlı hükümetini Ermeni tebasının yararına reform yapmaya zorlaması olarak tanımlanabilir. Son savaşta Balkanlar'daki topraklarının çoğunu kaybeden Osmanlı İmparatorluğu için Anadolu'daki birliği sağlamak tek çıkar yol olduğundan Sultan II. Abdülhamit İngiltere'yi oyalama yoluna giderek Ayastefanos, Kıbrıs Antlaşması ve Berlin Kongresi'nde söz verilen reformların gerçekleştirilmesini sürekli ertelemiştir. İngiltere'nin Mısır'ı işgal etmesiyle gündemden aniden düşen sorun, Osmanlı Devleti'nin Almanya ve Avusturya'yı arkasına almasıyla 1895'e kadar rafa kaldırılmıştır.

Chapter I

Introduction

For the period of 1878-1885, "*Anatolian Reform*"^{*} can be defined as the process of British efforts to make the Ottoman government introduce administrative reforms in its eastern provinces for the benefit of its Armenian subjects in order to thus prevent a possible Russian intervention in the region, which could endanger the British imperial route to India.

The problem emerged and became an international issue after the Turco-Russian War of 1877 when the possibility of a further Russian advance threatened British communication with India after the Russian occupation of the eastern Anatolian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As the protection of this communication was a matter of vital importance, Britain did not hesitate to put forth its sustained efforts to keep the Armenians in peace, and forced the Ottoman government to initiate administrative reforms which should have resulted in the protection of the lives, welfare of the Armenians who populated the region intensively and, thus, a prevention of any further Russian advance and intervention.

^{*} *Anadolu Islahati* is the term used for the Anatolian reform process in the Ottoman documents.

Mention can be made only of "attempts" at reforms but not "actual measures" since the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II considered British intervention a threat to the integrity of the country and resisted the provisions of the treaties which obliged the Porte to introduce reforms. After the Turco-Russian War of 1877, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its territories in the Balkans, hence, maintaining unity in Asia Minor became the foremost goal for the Ottoman administration.

In this thesis, which is based mostly on British official documents, I will elaborate the first phase of the "*Anatolian Reform*" process which mainly arose as a diplomatic clash between the Sublime Porte and the British government.

Chapter II

The Socio-Economic Origins of the *Anatolian Reform*

1- Strategic Nature of The Region

The name *Armenia*, in this paper, denotes the territory which was once held by the historical Armenian Kingdom and had been used by the Europeans for centuries even during the times that the Armenians remained a minority in the region. Thus, it has a predominantly geographical meaning. However, after the Treaty of Berlin it gained a political meaning and as a measure the Porte deliberately began to use the name *Kürdistan* for the same region, which also dovetailed with Abdulhamid's pan-Islamist policy.¹ The name *Kurdistan* was used by the Porte to represent the country inhabited by the Kurds but it did not denote a particular province of the Empire.² In contrast, the name *Armenia* was unknown to the Sublime Porte and did not denote any particular region in the Ottoman provincial division.

The northeastern edge of the region is a bastion of high mountain ranges and high valleys that vary in altitude from 800 to 2000 meters (Erzurum 1880m., Kars 1800 m., Mus 1400 m., Erzincan 1300 m., Erivan 890 m.)³ To

¹ i.e.: The reply of the Porte to the collective note of 1880. F.O. 424/106, p. 515-6, No. 256 in British Documents on Ottoman Armenians (BDOA). Ed. by Bilal Simsir. Ankara: TTK, 1989. Vol. II (1880-1890) No. 20, p. 75

² F.O. 424/86, p. 147-8, No. 198 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 247, p. 514.

³ EI², *Armenia*, vol. 1, p. 634.

the north of it lies the Transcaucasian Valley between Batum on the Black Sea and Baku on the Caspian; to the south, its highlands give way to the plains of Syria and Mesopotamia. Eastern Asia Minor, despite the rugged nature of its terrain, had often been a highway for the invasion of Anatolia.⁴ From the plain of Cilicia the anti-Taurus mountain ranges slope northward to Kayseri and northeastward to the mountains of Erzurum which extend southward to the mountain ranges of northern and western Persia. The head waters of the Tigris and Euphrates begin in these mountains.⁵

2- Trade Routes

From the Persian Gulf one trade route ran via Baghdad and Mosul to Diyarbekir and across the anti-Taurus either via Harput to Sivas and thence north to the Black Sea at Sinop or west to Istanbul, or via Malatya to Kayseri. Sivas was an entrepot on the crossroads of Asia Minor with access to the north, the west, and Cilicia in the south. Another route from Hurmuz on the Persian Gulf coast of Iran went to Isfahan and via Hamadan to Tebriz and Erzurum, where it connected with routes leading to the Caspian near Baku and to the Black Sea at Trabzon.⁶

On account of its geographical position Trabzon was the natural emporium of all the country to the south-east

⁴ Yale, William. *The Near East, a Modern History*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968, p. 115.

⁵ Ibid., p. 116.

⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

of the Black Sea. The revival of the trade of Trabzon in the 19th century dates back to the 1830s. Trabzon was the center of traffic for three important trade routes: Firstly, that between Europe and Persia, in other words the Persian transit, from and to the districts of Azerbaijan, Ghilan and Mezanderan, namely those of which Khoi, Droomeah, Tabriz and Tehran were the chief centers; secondly, in the adjoining and inland districts of Lazistan, Bayburt, Erzincan, Erzurum and Kars,⁷ and lastly, the coast trade from Batum to Giresun.⁸ The importance of the city arises from the fact that, as well as possessing a fair anchorage and a tolerable shelter on the seaside, it is placed at the opening of the only gorge, Degirmendere, affording a tolerable route, practicable in winter as in summer, across the great mountain chains to the central lands of Anatolia near Erzurum and thence to the Persian frontier. The construction of the Trabzon-Erzurum road was started in 1864 by this Degirmendere gorge⁹ in order to compete with the Russian Poti-Tiflis railway.¹⁰ The road was a promising project of the time; it was about 210 English miles in length,¹¹ started from Trabzon, and passing south-east from Erzurum and Bayazid, cut of the north-

⁷ Accounts and Papers, 1872, Trebizond, Report by Consul Palgrave, p. 746.

⁸ Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 59, p. 341

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 60, p. 432.

¹¹ Ibid.

eastern corner of Anatolia and communicated directly with Tebriz, Resht and Tehran.¹²

The principal transport of goods to the interior, and especially to Persia usually commenced in the spring. This was due to two causes: the difficulty of communicating through routes covered with snow, and the extra expense incurred by caravans as they could not find grazing grounds in winter and laboured under the necessity of buying fodder and paying high prices for barley. However, during the winters communications were not interrupted entirely.¹³

The region began to lose its commercial importance after the construction of the Poti-Tiflis railway and the Suez Canal. Although the Poti-Tiflis railway (opened in 1870) diverted from Trabzon part of the Persian transit,¹⁴ the latter route had still a great commercial value. In 1877 the trade of Trabzon was 8 million pounds, 5 million of which represented the imports, most of which went onwards through Erzurum.¹⁵

"The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the constantly increasing use of it by British shipping had made the Eastern Question more than ever before one of imperial defense because of the importance this short

¹² Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 59, p. 388.

¹³ Accounts and Papers, Commercial No. 19 (1879), p. 1026.

¹⁴ Accounts and Papers, Supplementary Report by Vice-Consul Biliotti for the Year 1873.

¹⁵ This figure was according to a journalist, Lucien Wolf; Walker, J. Christopher. Armenia: The Survival of a Nation. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990, p. 104.

all-sea route had quickly assumed in the public mind."¹⁶ In the six years following the opening of the Suez Canal, Britain acquired a majority in the Canal shares (1875) when the Khidive of Egypt, Ismail, had to sell his shares because of bankruptcy.¹⁷ From that time on Russia was aroused. Any challenging influence threatening British interests in the Eastern Mediterranean was detested by the British as the region became the crossroads to India.¹⁸ Moreover, Queen Victoria was created Empress of India in April 1876¹⁹ indicating the growth of interest in, and patriotic obsession with, the sub-continent. Thus, protection of the route to India became the cornerstone of British diplomacy.

3- Economic Conditions of the Region

The situation of Britain with regard to importation was quite different from what it was in exportation. Direct British trade had never existed to any great extent in the region, but indirect British trade was remarkable. The goods were sent to Istanbul and through native agents, mostly Greek and Armenian, were exported to Britain.²⁰ Between 1877-1882 there was a decline of 240.000 *liras*(1) or of nearly two-thirds in the export

¹⁶ Lee, Dwight E. *Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention Policy of 1878*. Harvard University Press, 1934, p. 11.

¹⁷ Hairallah, Shreen. *Railways in the Middle East, 1856-1948 (Political and Economic Background)*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1991, p. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁹ Walker, p. 106.

²⁰ Between 1879 and 1882 only three British vessels embarked to the Trabzon port; Accounts and Papers, 1872, Trebizond, Report by Consul Palgrave, p. 746.

trade from Trabzon port to Great Britain. The export trade with other countries, reckoning also shipments by sailing vessels has augmented by 180.000*l.* between 1877-1882.²¹ *Tiftik*, a wool produced by the sheep possessed by the Kurds, was the only article which had ever attained a certain importance in the exports from the Trabzon port. Between 1873-1878 it was shipped for a value superior by 185.000*l.* to that since embarked. It was mainly brought to Trabzon from the region in the vicinity of Diyarbekir, but during the Turco-Russian War took the way of Iskenderun. After the war it began to revert to this port.²²

Manchester goods played the most important part in British importation. However, they showed a decrease of 185.300*l.* between 1877-1882. It was due in great part to other European red-cotton twist and woollen manufactures- the first from Italy, Switzerland, and Austria, the second from the two last-mentioned countries- gradually having almost superseded these articles, which formerly had been entirely or mostly, imported from Britain. Red cotton-twist was in great use in Anatolia for the manufacture of cotton stuffs at that time, but besides its being dearer in Great Britain, higher customs duties were levied on British red-cotton yarn than those which affected the identical products of other countries.²³

²¹ Accounts and Papers, Report by Consul Alfred Biliotti on the Trade, Commerce and Navigation in the Vilayet of Trebizond for the Year 1873 to 1882, p. 2085.

²² Ibid., p. 2084.

²³ Ibid., p. 2086.

Exports from Persia to Great Britain were very limited but do not appear to have been susceptible of great augmentation as were those of Anatolia. Carpets were the main article of Iranian exportation to Britain.²⁴ Cotton and woollen manufactures were also important articles of trade, but the quality of those sent to Persia were far superior to those imported into Anatolia.²⁵

One of the main causes of the decline of the Persian trade was the lack of those beasts of burden which had perished during the Turco-Russian War. The number of native caravans which had more interest than the Persians themselves in keeping up the transit through Anatolia, was reduced by nearly three-quarters and the Persian transit was naturally affected in both ways, that is in importations as well as in exportations. Hundreds of packages landed in Trabzon en route to Persia had to be yearly reshipped and forwarded by way of the Caucasus. However, the increase which is observed on Persian imports and exports during the year 1882 would tend to prove that an amelioration was gradually taking place with regard to the means of transport in this part of Anatolia.²⁶

The cession of Kars, Ardahan and Batum to Russia had deprived Trabzon of a commercial field of some importance but the extreme limits to which goods were sent from this

²⁴ Ibid., p. 2085.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 2087.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 2076.

port was the same as before; that is to say, the country stretching from Erzincan to the west, Diyarbekir to the south, and the Persian frontier to the east.²⁷ After the war, the products of the country were sold by natives for more than they used to be formerly, as a compensation for the loss of profits previously derived from the Persian transit, which was than partly lost to them, and also as a consequence of the presence of the Russians at Batum, where vegetables and fruit were sent in large quantities owing to the high prices they fetched.²⁸

The main cause of the unsatisfactory state of things was the impoverished condition of the Anatolian consumers.²⁹ Another cause which greatly affected transit was a protective measure adopted by merchants of Trabzon, which prevented the influx of caravans for a time at Trabzon. In order to be able to cope with the freights by the Tiflis route, which were far inferior in quality to those by way of Erzurum, a commission was appointed and rates were fixed which muleteers considered to be too much low.³⁰

In 1880 trade declined. A rather serious damage to the Erzurum road, the Kurdish raid into Persia, shifted the trade route to Poti.³¹ In April 1880 the extraordinary

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Accounts and Papers, Report by Consul Biliotti on the Trade, Commerce and Navigation of the Port and District of Trebizond for the Year 1881, p. 746

²⁹ Ibid., p. 736.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Accounts and Papers, Report by Consul Biliotti on the Trade, Commerce and Navigation of the Port and District of Trebizond for the Year 1880, p. 1106.

swelling of the River Harchut caused serious damage to the Erzurum road in Gümüşhane Valley³² and this damage persisted during 1881 and affected the Persian transit negatively.³³ In 1882 'nothing or little' was done on the road which still required repairing.³⁴ Finally, in 1883, this road was thoroughly repaired to an extent of 58 miles.³⁵

4- Armenians in the Light of Socio-Economic Conditions

The development of Armenian nationalism, the activities of the Armenian revolutionary committees and the relation between economic conditions and Armenian nationalism are beyond the concern of this paper. However, the socio-economic conditions of the region which led to unrest among the Armenians and hastened Armenian nationalism will be summarized in order to make clear the British concern for the introduction of reforms.

In the 1850s Batum was a mere village, till the establishment of the Russian Black Sea Steamer Lines and the neighborhood of Poti raised it to commercial eminence, surpassing in some respects that of any harbor

³² Ibid., p. 1118.

³³ Accounts and Papers, Report by Consul Biliotti on the Trade, Commerce and Navigation of the Port and District of Trebizond for the Year 1881, p. 736.

³⁴ Accounts and Papers, Commercial No. 22 (1883), p. 1247.

³⁵ Accounts and Papers, Report by Consul Biliotti on the Trade and Commerce of the District of Trebizond for the Year 1883, p. 1819.

on the Black Sea shores.³⁶ In the 1860s Armenians had established a colony in Batum and according to the British consul Palgrave their presence or increase in a town had much the same significance as a like movement among the Jews of Europe; "it was a thermometer to mark the growing prosperity of the place, and the extension of its monetary transactions."³⁷

In 1869 the British consul in Erzurum, Taylor, noticed that Armenians constituted a minority, which was involved in agriculture and trade and eventually controlled three-quarters of capital and commerce in the region.³⁸ The *öshür* (tithe) tax was farmed out to speculating capitalists, Armenians for the most part, who again sub farmed it to others.³⁹ In 1884, 5 out of 12 commission agents; 18 out of 33 exporters; 19 out of 63 importers, were Armenians in Trabzon.⁴⁰ The "higher moneyed classes" were pro-Russian and were supplied with Russian passports.⁴¹

The Turco-Russian War of 1877 created a demand for all kinds of provisions and this yielded the producers great benefits. The Armenian merchants in Trabzon and

³⁶ Accounts and Papers, 1873, vol. 65, p. 1154.

³⁷ Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 59, p. 399.

³⁸ Simsir, Bilal. *The Genesis of the Armenian Question*. Ankara: Publications of the Turkish Historical Society. Serial VII-No. 84, 1990, p. 4.

³⁹ Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 59, p. 379.

⁴⁰ I compiled this information from the tables according to the surnames of the merchants. Thus, these numbers indicate the minimum number of Armenians in the business; Accounts and Papers, 1884-1885, Commercial No. 22 (1885), p. 1084-6.

⁴¹ Simsir, p. 5. In 1869, there were 343 Russian citizens in Trabzon, however, most of them were Turkish citizens, Armenians and Greeks, furnished with Russian pseudo passports. Accounts and Papers, 1868-1869, vol. 59, p. 338.

Erzurum, had "done an excellent business" especially in brandy and spirits.⁴² Travelers who journeyed along the Trabzon-Erzurum route during the Russian occupation observed that "untenanted old houses were repaired and inhabited, shops were opened and visibly did a good business, the rates of freight doubled, in short, a powerful impulse was given to the Armenian trade." However, those who enjoyed the Russian occupation were certain Armenian merchants of Trabzon and Erzurum and the towns and villages near the road. The general situation of the region was deplorable, as was observed by the British consuls.⁴³

According to the nationalist Ottoman Christian intellectuals of the 19th century, disintegration of the empires and the establishment of nation-states was inevitable and desirable and was the only alternative to disorder, anarchy and stagnation. The spirit that informed any movement toward nationhood has been seen as stemming inexorably from inalienable rights mandated by its supporters, and any exercise of these rights consistent with a principle of self-determination has been thought practically irresistible and morally unopposable.⁴⁴

⁴² Simsir, p. 6.

⁴³ "Wherever I halted and made inquiries, people complained bitterly of heavy taxation and of the losses they had been subjected to for two years past from the constant passage and billeting of soldiers."; F.O. 424/77, p. 48-50, No. 114. in BDOA, Vol. 1, No. 116, p. 258.

⁴⁴ Haddad, William and Ochsenwald, William. *Nationalism in a Non-National State*. Ohio University Press, 1977, p. i.

There were clashing interests and parties among the Armenians. Until the "back to the provinces" movement, whose de facto inauguration was marked by a sermon of Hrimian and which became popular among the Armenian intelligentsia of Istanbul after the Berlin Treaty, a vast gap of mutual understanding continued to separate the urban and peasant Armenians.⁴⁵ *Amiras*, Armenian notables, controlled shares of imperial trade and industry, and thus, had little interest in revolt or upheaval despite the sufferings of their "rural brothers" in eastern Asia Minor.⁴⁶ At the beginning of the war clerics feared that if they were annexed by Russia they would be swallowed by Orthodoxy. On the outbreak of the Turco-Russian War Patriarch Nerses Varjabedian issued a declaration advising the Armenians to show loyalty to the state and to work and pray for the Ottoman victory. However, *kavagarans* (Armenian villagers living in the provinces) tired of Kurdish oppression and Ottoman misgovernment were willing to welcome the Russian army.⁴⁷ The Russians gradually restored order in the regions they invaded, "thus the Armenian villagers and townsmen had a reason for being discontent with their Ottoman masters

⁴⁵ Zeidner, Robert F. *Britain and the Launching of the Armenian Question*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976), 465-483, p. 467.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

⁴⁷ As early as 1862, Arminius Vambery, no lover of Armenians, during his journey to the East stopped at a village near Bayazid. When he asked the villagers why they did not ask the help of the governor of Erzurum against the brigands he was replied that 'the governor himself was at the head of the thieves. God alone, and his representative on earth, the Russian Tsar, could help them'; Walker, p. 109

when Russia offered peace at San Stefano."⁴⁸ At this date the Armenians began to question the legitimacy of the Ottoman administration.

Thus, we can posit an Armenian mercantile bourgeoisie which fell into decadence and unrest because of wars and the changing trade routes. The weakness and demoralization in Eastern Anatolia, in contrast to the strength of the Russians in their Transcaucasian provinces, impressed the Turkish Armenians deeply as reported before the war by the British consuls.⁴⁹ Ottoman Armenians, on the one hand, observed the Tiflis-Poti line, security and so on in Russia, and on the other, were living under the oppression of the nomadic Kurdish tribes, suffering from the state of the Trabzon-Erzurum road which could not be mended for several years, and so on. During the Turco-Russian War of 1877, things had become worse; many Armenian families migrated to Russia.

⁴⁸ Zeidner, p. 471.

⁴⁹ Shukla, Ram Lakhan. *Britain, India and the Turkish Empire, 1853-1882*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973, p. 43.

Chapter III

The Political Origins of Anatolian Reformation

1- The Turco-Russian War and The Strategic Significance of the Region

An extensive portion of "Armenia" was annexed by Russia by the Treaty of Edirne in 1829. What was left to the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the Turco-Russian War of 1877 was Erzurum, Kars, Bayazid, Mush and Van, extending from Trabzon to the source of the Euphrates and from there to the foot of Mount Ararat. The remainder also had a vital importance for the British route to India.

The war commenced in April 1877 and on May 6th the British government issued a proclamation of "neutrality." According to this proclamation, Britain would not assist the Porte as long as Ottoman interests were involved alone, but if the war endangered British interests the government would defend them. The Suez Canal had to be kept open, undamaged and uninterrupted; there must be no attempt to blockade the Canal and no occupation of, or attack on, Egypt; Istanbul had to remain in Ottoman hands and the existing regulations of the Straits should not be altered.¹

¹ Medlicott, M. N. The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the near Eastern Settlement (1878-1880). Edinburgh: Frank Cass & CO. LTD, 2nd Edition, 1963, p. 3.

After the Russian attack Russophobia revived in Britain and throughout the Turco-Russian War there was a flow of memoranda from British officers to the British Foreign Office on "Asiatic Turkey". They pointed out different aspects of the issue, but almost all of these reports reached the same consequences about the Russian advance. Annexation of "Armenia" by Russia was against the British interests at some points:

Firstly, the geographical position of the Ottoman territories coveted, threatened or occupied by Russia were of high strategic value to their Indian empire as well as their routes to it. Britain considered Turkish Armenia to be the avenue of Russia for approaching the Persian Gulf through the Euphrates Valley which would expose the western flank of India to danger.² Sir Austen Henry Layard believed that even if Erzurum and Trabzon were not ceded to Russia at the end of the war, the capture of Batum and Kars would enable her to seize both these places at any appropriate moment. Batum and the road by Kars to northern Persia, Van and Musul would give her the command of the whole of Asia Minor, Azerbaijan, and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.³ According to Lytton, the Governor-general of India, capture of Turkish Armenia by Russia would give her many strategic advantages: two sea bases, one on the Caspian and one on the Black Sea, a

² Shukla, p. 39-40.

³ Ibid., p. 59.

commanding land position between them and an enormous military reserve behind her back.⁴

According to Kemball, who was sent to observe the impending war between Russia and Turkey and the anticipated consequences of Russian success, these regions were inhabited by diverse races alien and hence antagonistic to the Turks. He observed that they could be easily assimilated by Russia.⁵

Temple concluded that Britain was in safe in the Persian Gulf and Shatt-el Arab as far as Basra, nevertheless, their position at Baghdad was threatened by Russian successes in "Armenia." Baghdad had an important bearing on the British Empire in India. He was very anxious about the possible occupation of Erzurum and Diyarbekir by the Russians and its effect on Arabia. However, free passage of the Bosphorus was a safeguard against Russia. Any Russian move from an "Armenian" base towards Baghdad would be thwarted by a British force, which, passing through the Bosphorus and appearing off Trabzon, could threaten her position at Erzurum.⁶ According to General Simmons, Inspector-general of British fortifications,⁷ if Russia possessed a fleet with a naval arsenal in the Bosphorus, British communication with India through Egypt would be at her mercy.⁸

⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

⁷ Lee, p. 40.

⁸ Shukla, p. 46.

Ottoman administrators were also aware of the British interests in the region. In his report to the Sultan, Kamil Pasha stated that Britain's concern was to protect her colonies of India and Britain required the Ottoman Empire to secure this end.⁹

A Russian advance could also endanger the Suez Canal. In his report to the Earl of Derby, Layard stated that, Britain had free access to Suez Canal and it was unnecessary for them to think of an alternative route to India, thus it mattered little to Britain whether Mesopotamia and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, which would furnish such an alternative, were in the hands of Russia or of any other power other than the Ottomans. However, he expressed doubt whether Britain would maintain her supremacy in Egypt.¹⁰ In the late 1870s France was rapidly recovering her naval and military strength and was turning her attention to Egypt again to challenge British supremacy there. According to a dispatch written by Lord Lyons which was mentioned by Layard, France "was not unlikely to propose a separation of Egypt from Turkey" in a conference that might be held

⁹ Kamil Pasa Evraki, 86/1-67.

¹⁰ "But what security have we that the Suez Canal can always open to us? If France should obtain that preponderance in Egypt at which, according to Lord Lyons, she aims, could we at all times, and under all circumstances, when at war with her, or with any power to which her sympathies or interests may induce her accord a 'benevolent neutrality,' or when under the urgent necessity of sending troops to India to deal with a mutiny, a rebellion, or a threatened Russian invasion, could we, I ask, be certain that the Canal might not be closed to us?" F.O. 424/63, No. 124 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 50, p. 139.

for the settlement of the Eastern Question. France's aim was to place Egypt under a joint protectorate or to take any other measure to prevent British control of the Canal.¹¹ Thus it was of the utmost importance to secure the only alternative route to India, namely, the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris and the approaches to them, against Russia. This alternative route would render Britain almost independent of the Suez Canal.¹²

Secondly, a Russian invasion would threaten British commerce in the region,¹³ though it was indirect and was insignificant for income compared with the total British trade.

Lastly, it would have negative effects on the opinions of Indian and Central Asian Muslim subjects of the British Empire. The conquest of the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire by the Russians would produce a conviction of the irresistible strength of Russia in the opinions of the Central Asian states and Muslim Indians.¹⁴

The only way to secure this route was to keep it under the complete command of the Ottomans and "to shape British policy as to be able to rely upon Turkey."¹⁵ Amball stated that while British interests in European Turkey were merged with international rights and

ibid.

Shukla, p. 61.

ibid.

P.O. 424/63, p. 86-9, No. 124 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 50, p. 139.

ibid.

obligations, their interests in Asiatic Turkey depended for their protection on a weak ally, the Sublime Porte.¹⁶

2- Political Developments After the Turco-Russian War

a- The Treaty of San Stefano

Being defeated on the Caucasian and Balkan fronts, the Ottoman Empire lost Kars, Ardahan, Batum, Oltu and Bayazid in the east and had to submit to the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano. On March 3rd, 1878, the former Russian ambassador to Istanbul, a well-known pan-Slavist, General Ignatiev dictated the provisions of the Treaty to Safvet Pasha.¹⁷ Then, he proceeded to Istanbul to obtain Abdulhamid's ratification.¹⁸

The rivalry between Britain and Russia found expression when Britain challenged the provisions of the Treaty in which Russia had acquired the right to continue to occupy the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire until the Ottoman Empire had carried out the requisite reforms for the benefit of its Armenian subjects.¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Shukla, p. 45.

¹⁷ Simsir, p. 7. Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano read: "As the evacuation by the Russian troops of the territory which they occupy in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications detrimental to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the Sublime Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians."

¹⁸ Medlicott, p. 10.

¹⁹ According to Salisbury "even if it be certain that Batum and Ardahan and Kars will not become the base from which emissaries of intrigue will issue forth to be in due time followed by invading armies, the mere retention of them by Russia will exercise a powerful influence in disintegrating the Asiatic dominion of the

British government received a copy of the Treaty on March 23rd, and Disraeli proposed to send an army to the region to occupy Alexandretta and Cyprus to counterbalance the Russian occupation of Armenia.²⁰ On April 1st, the day after he assumed the office of Foreign Secretary, Salisbury stated that the issues should be settled by a European Congress.²¹ In his circular, Salisbury's opposition to the Russian territorial gains in the East was twofold: "The acquisition of the strongholds of Armenia would place the population of that province under the immediate influence of the power which holds them; while the extensive European trade which passed from Trabzon to Persia would, in consequence of the cessions in Kurdistan, be liable to be arrested at the pleasure of the Russian government by the prohibitory barriers of the commercial system."²² Holding the Valley

Porte. As a monument of feeble defense on the one side, and successful aggression on the other, they will be regarded by the Asiatic population as foreboding the course of political history in the immediate near future, and will stimulate, by the combined action of hope and fear, devotion to the Power which is in the ascendant, and desertion of the Power which is thought to be falling into decay.

It is impossible for Her Majesty's Government to accept, without making an effort to avert it, the effect which such a state of feeling would produce upon regions whose political condition deeply concerns the Oriental interests of Great Britain. The only provision which can furnish a substantial security for the stability of Ottoman rule in Asiatic Turkey, and which would be essential after the re-conquest of the Russian annexations as it is now, is an engagement on the part of a Power strong enough to fulfill it, that any further encroachments by Russia upon Turkish territory in Asia will be prevented by force of arms. Turkey No. 36 (1878), p. 1-2, No. 1 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 72, p. 179.

²⁰ Walker, p. 111.

²¹ Ibid., p. 112.

²² Ibid.

of Alashkert, Russia would be in a position to wreck the trade of Europe.²³

The defeat of the Ottoman army produced a general belief in Ottoman decadence and an expectation of speedy political change which raised the possibility of the Armenians turning their eyes towards Russia, and thus, the Russian threat was frequently exploited against the British diplomats by the Armenian leadership. As early as March 20th, 1878, a "trustworthy" person who was among the leading Armenians of Istanbul gave Layard a memorandum, relating to ways of securing a "certain autonomy" to Armenia, and demanded British help.²⁴ Layard considered the demands of the Armenians as the commencement of a movement which might lead to serious results affecting British interests in the East and thought that it would probably lead to more harm than good.²⁵

The Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Nerses, stated to Layard that if they could not obtain what they asked from the justice and through the intervention of the European powers, they would appeal to Russia, and would not cease to agitate until they were annexed by her.²⁶ Also, an Armenian who held a post at the Sublime Porte implied that they would place themselves completely in the hands of Russia and even prefer annexation to her to

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ F.O. 424/69, p. 54-5, No. 107 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 50, p. 139.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ F.O. 424/68, p. 346-8, No. 639 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 64, p. 160.

remaining under Turkish rule unless they got what they wanted.²⁷

Britain, through the efforts of her diplomats, had pursued the amelioration of the conditions of the Armenian population.²⁸ The main British concern was to force the Ottoman government "to do all in its power to prove to the Armenians that it was determined to secure to them in future just and equal government and that Russia should thus be deprived of a pretext for interfering on their behalf, and that of raising an Armenian question which might prove the source of fresh difficulties to Turkey, and afford Russia a further opportunity of extending her influence and ultimately her rule in the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan."²⁹

Nevertheless, this meant a shift in British policy as it was pursued during the war. Just before the Turco-Russian War, British public opinion was divided and unclear as to how to make a choice between the "Merciless Turk and Barbarian Russ" but the British were "inclined to think that the Turk was the least liked of the two."³⁰

²⁷ F.O. 424/68, p. 354, No. 644 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 65, p. 162-3.

²⁸ see. F.O. 424/70, p. 360-1, No. 587 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 71, p. 175-6.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ In his pamphlet 'Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East (1876)' Gladstone described the Turks in these terms: "It is not a question of Mahometanism simply but of Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race. They are not the mild Mahometans of India nor the chivalrous Saladins of Syria nor the cultured Moors of Spain. They were, upon the whole, from the first black day when they entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and as far as their domination reached, civilization disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law. For the guide of this life they had a relentless fatalism; for its

The Ottomans were considered to be "an ancient but still alien conqueror, resting more upon actual power than upon the sympathies of common nationality."³¹ However, the speedy Russian advance in the Ottoman territory and British imperial interests in the region shifted the government policy and in order to legitimize the British assistance to the Turks in the British public opinion they tried to transform the image of the Turks into heroes, especially by the publications made after the heroic defense of Plevne by Gazi Osman Pasha.³²

Disraeli sent Sir Austen Henry Layard, a "zealous champion" of the Turkish cause,³³ as the British ambassador to Istanbul in place of Sir Henry Elliot who had returned to Britain when the Conference of Istanbul broke up. Layard pursued the Palmerstonian tradition of preserving the Ottoman Empire, in the British interest, during his office; it was him "more than any other single individual at home or in the foreign service, who brought the attention of the government and the British public the subject of Asia Minor and its relation to British interests and especially its connection with the route to India." His name became inseparably linked with the revival of the traditional policy towards the Ottoman

reward hereafter, a sensual paradise." Salt, Jeremy. *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*. London: Frank Cass & CO. LTD, 1993, p. 45.

³¹ Turkey No. 36 (1878), p. 1-2, No. 1 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 72, p. 179.

³² Salt, p. 45.

³³ Shukla, p. 90.

Empire and with the attempt at its reform which was undertaken after the Congress of Berlin.³⁴

Britain could not risk the possibility of a war with Russia which could cause a "calamity" but she was determined to prevent any further encroachment by Russia upon Turkish territory by force of arms.³⁵ Thus, Disraeli went through the motions of preliminary mobilization to signal to Russia his intent to wage war. Britain spent 6 million pounds on the preparation of its army in a very short span of time and compelled Russia to agree to the substitution of article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano with the article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin.³⁶

b- The Cyprus Convention

According to Layard, in possession of Armenia and with straits open to her fleet, Russia would at any time be able to cut off the British access to India. In order to prevent this Britain would have to occupy Egypt and keep a powerful fleet in the Mediterranean always ready to act.³⁷ As this action was impossible at that time, Britain had to seek another remedy. Malta was an inconvenient base from which to prevent a Russian assault as it was four days' sail from the "scene of action."³⁸

³⁴ Lee, p. 44.

³⁵ Turkey No. 36 (1878), p. 1-2, No. 1 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 72, p. 178.

³⁶ Dadrian, Vahakn N. *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*. London: Bergham Books, 1995, p. 67.

³⁷ Shukla, p. 58.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

Also, some other places were considered for occupation by Britain, like Gallipoli, Lemnos, Mitilene, Crete, Alexandretta, Acre, Haifa etc., but Cyprus seemed to be the most convenient base, largely on the basis of a confidential memorandum submitted by an officer of the Intelligence Department, Colonel Robert Home,³⁹ to Simmons.⁴⁰ Occupying Cyprus, Britain would hold the keys to Asia Minor. The island would furnish a base from which an army could control any advance on the Persian Gulf or the Suez Canal either from the Caucasus or from the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates. Britain also would have a naval base which could easily be defended and from which the British warships could watch the lines of communication with India passing through the Suez Canal.⁴¹ The British government would also avoid the trouble with France which an acquisition on the Syrian coast might entail.⁴²

On May 26th, 1878, just two days after the Ali Suavi incident, Britain proposed her occupation of Cyprus and Layard was instructed to persuade the Sultan to this end.⁴³ Ali Suavi, an ex-administrator of Galatasaray School, attempted to seize the Çiragan Palace with several hundred Balkan immigrants and restore the ex-Sultan Murad V. But he failed and was killed by the

³⁹ Lee, p. 32.

⁴⁰ Shukla, p. 77.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Medlicott, p. 19.

⁴³ Turkey No. 36 (1878), p. 1-2, No. 1 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 72, p. 179.

palace guards. According to Medlicott, after this event the Sultan was on the verge of a nervous and possibly a mental collapse, and accepted Layard's proposal without hesitation.⁴⁴ However, we notice in the Ottoman documents that the Sultan was quite aware of the course of events. He ordered the Council of Ministers the renegotiation and elaboration of the subject,⁴⁵ did his best to resist and only accepted the convention on the condition that his sovereignty should not be harmed (*Hukuk-u shahaneme asla halel gelmemek suretiyle*).⁴⁶

On June 4th, 1878, Layard concluded the Cyprus Convention which was described by Gladstone as an "insane convention."⁴⁷ In return for its willingness to protect Turkey "by force of arms" against Russian territorial encroachments, beyond Kars, Ardahan and Batum, Britain was allowed to occupy Cyprus. Besides, the Sultan promised Britain that he would introduce reforms for the protection of the Christians in the eastern provinces of the Empire.⁴⁸ "This article offered to the British diplomatic and consular agents in Turkey 'an ample ground for remonstrances' or interferences, in favor of Ottoman Armenians." According to Salisbury, from now on, "Great

⁴⁴ Medlicott, p. 21.

⁴⁵ YEE 9-1094-72-4.

⁴⁶ YEE 14-163-126-7.

⁴⁷ Salt, p. 48.

⁴⁸ Article 1 of the Anglo-Turkish Convention with regard to Cyprus which was a supplement to the issue read: "His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, promises to Britain to introduce necessary reforms, to be agreed upon later between two powers, into the government and for the protection of the Christians and other subjects of the Porte in these territories"

Britain would spare no diplomatic exertion to obtain good government for the populations in Asiatic Turkey."⁴⁹

c- The Berlin Congress

Mobilization of the British troops and the internal problems of Russia (the war was costing Russia two million a day, and the losses from casualties and disease were increasing; nihilism and terrorism revived in the country and public opinion was sympathetic towards the revolutionaries) forced the Tsar, through the secret protocol of 29th May signed with Britain, to accept the submittal of all the clauses of the Treaty of San Stefano to the Berlin Congress and to redraw the lines of the Asiatic frontier between Turkey and Russia.⁵⁰ Russia refused to give up Kars and Batum but had been persuaded to withdraw from the Bayazid and Alashkert valleys which had the utmost importance for the route of India. Besides, once the Cyprus Convention had been concluded with Turkey, Salisbury felt assured that it would be a sufficient guarantee against the danger resulting from the Russian capture of Kars and Batum.⁵¹

At the Congress the Armenian Question was of less importance than the other issues, and so the Congress was a failure from the point of view of the Armenians. However, with the Treaty the question became an international issue. At San Stefano, execution of the

⁴⁹ Simsir, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Medlicott, p. 19-21.

⁵¹ Shukla, p. 80.

reforms was tied up with the evacuation of the Ottoman territories by the Russian soldiers, but now the Treaty of Berlin put the Ottoman administration under a pledge of reforms which did not bind the government to the establishment of any machinery for foreign supervision.⁵² In this way, Britain did not let Russia become the champion of the Armenian cause and intervene in the issue by herself. Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin, together with the stipulations of article 1 of the Cyprus Convention gave Britain the option of considering intervention and a willingness to use force for that purpose.⁵³ There was no hope left for Armenians other than British protection.⁵⁴

With the Treaty of Berlin the Ottoman Empire was forced to give up two fifths of its entire territory and one fifth of its population, about 5.5 million people, almost half of whom were Muslims; Serbia, Romania, Montenegro were granted the status of independent states, Bulgaria gained autonomy, Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia were put under a special arrangement.⁵⁵ It also lost substantial revenues, though it was partially compensated by the tribute paid by the remaining vassals and the agreement of the newly independent states to assume

⁵² Zeidner, p. 470. Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin read: "The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out without further delay the ameliorations and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers who will superintend their application.", Dadrian, p. 106.

⁵³ Dadrian, p. 63.

⁵⁴ F.O. 424/72, p.68, No. 99 in BDOA Vol. I, No. 74, p. 182.

⁵⁵ Dadrian, p. 31.

portions of the Ottoman public debt. "In so far as Britain was concerned the Russian threat was weakened but for the Ottoman Empire the Congress of Berlin was a terrible defeat, depriving it of territory, people and finances and making it difficult for what was left to survive."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Salt, p. 47.

Chapter IV

The Introduction of the Reforms

1- Reform Attempts Under Foreign Pressure

As aforementioned, the key point of the British policy was to keep the peace among the Armenians to prevent Russian intervention which would endanger the British route to India. According to the British government the immediate necessity of Asiatic Turkey was the "simplest form of order and good government; for such security from rapine, whether lawless or legal, that industry might flourish and population might cease to decline."¹ Fleeing from the advancing Russian army, the armed Circassian and Kurdish tribes gave impetus to the disorder in the region where they pastured their flocks and became a menace to the security of life and property of sedentary Christians. Moreover, it is probable that the Porte viewed the settlement of Muslim refugees in the eastern provinces as a deterrent to separatist plotting and uprisings among the Armenians.² "The ravages of the Kurds...which were equally onerous to the Christian and the Moslem could only be suppressed by a police force of a military character, well found and handled; and until the suppression was complete, all other measures for promoting the prosperity of the country would be futile."³

¹ Turkey No. 51 (1878), p. 1-5, No. 1 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 81, p. 192.

² Zeidner, p. 468.

³ Turkey No. 51 (1878), p. 1-5, No. 1 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 81, p. 192.

British insistence on reform in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire where the Armenians were living started after the Treaty of San Stefano. Even before the signature of the Cyprus Convention, namely, before the Ottoman Empire's committing herself to the pledges of reform to Britain, Britain had forced the Ottoman administration to take immediate measures to prevent a repetition of the depredation and excesses which had been committed by the Kurds upon the Armenians of Erzurum and Diyarbekir. Layard sent British officials, Biliotti (British Consul for Trabzon) and Rassam, to the region for the purpose of reporting on the subject.⁴ The governors of these provinces were highly praised by the consuls, however, it was thought that they should be provided with a sufficient military or police force to afford the protection of the Christians.⁵ On May 10th, 1878, Layard negotiated with Sadik Pasha and his predecessor Ahmed Vefik Pasha, and noted the Prime Minister's determination to send a special commissioner, Ali Shefik Bey, to the region for the purpose of examining and redressing the grievances of the Armenians. Also, the military authorities on the spot were authorized to employ force for the repression of excesses by the Kurds.⁶ Layard was thinking of appointing a consul or a vice-consul at Diyarbekir, or some other place on the borders of the country inhabited by the Kurds, who

⁴ F.O. 424/70, p. 360-1, No. 587 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 71, p. 175.

⁵ Ibid., p. 176.

⁶ Ibid.

might keep the British Embassy informed about the events in the region.⁷

With the Cyprus Convention the Ottoman Empire had undertaken to come to an understanding with Britain for the protection and better government of the Christian and other subjects of the Empire in Asiatic Turkey. According to the Convention the Sultan engaged to agree with the British government upon the detail of the reforms to be introduced.⁸ The determination of the reforms to be accomplished in the European provinces of the Empire was entrusted by the Treaty of Berlin to a European commission which would be specially nominated for this purpose.⁹ However, a different course was adopted in the Asiatic provinces of the Empire: the need for reform in the region was fully recognized in the Treaty of Berlin and Cyprus Convention but the measures by which it was to be carried out were left to be devised and implemented by the Sultan in direct agreement with or under the general supervision of other powers.¹⁰ The Sultan should determine the measures in the first instance, but the measures were to be communicated to the other signatories of the Berlin Treaty who reserved the right to supervise the application of them.¹¹ The measures which were applied in the Balkans could not be safely imitated in the Asiatic

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Turkey No. 51 (1878), p. 1-5, No. 1 in *BDQA*, Vol. I, No. 81, p. 190.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

provinces of the Empire. The Muslims constituted an enormous majority of the population of the region and were unfitted for institutions which were alien to their traditions. The Christians to whom a representative system might perhaps be suited, were not only a small minority, but were so scattered and intermixed with the Muslims that any separate machinery of government designed for them alone would be attended with the gravest practical difficulties.¹²

Lord Salisbury instructed Layard, on August 8th, 1878, that the Ottoman government should accomplish the reforms in Asiatic Turkey, to which the Sultan was bound by the stipulations of the treaties without delay.¹³ Layard should especially direct the attention of the Sultan in certain matters: establishment of a gendarmery in the Asiatic provinces which would be organized and commanded by European officers; establishment of central tribunals at a certain number of the most important Asiatic towns, which would have jurisdiction over lower courts and in each of which there should be a European learned in the law, whose consent should be necessary in every judgment; appointment of a tax collector in each *vilayet* who should be charged to convert the *ösur* tax into a fixed rent-charge; appointment of governors and judges for a fixed number of years, at least five.¹⁴ In the beginning, Britain was very careful to abstain from

¹² Ibid., p. 191.

¹³ Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 195.

proposing the employment of British officers in the region as this might give a pretext for the insinuation that she sought to acquire any control inconsistent with the complete and disputed sovereignty of the Sultan. To this end Layard was strictly warned by Salisbury.¹⁵

Britain intended to establish a kind of protectorate "under the guise of reforms."¹⁶ In September 1878, Layard informed Salisbury that if a loan could be raised upon revenues of any particular province or provinces in Asia Minor, the Sultan "would be ready to confide their collection to an Englishman recommended by Her Majesty's Government." He added that "this might be a first step towards carrying out one of the reforms they required" and suggested this: "The Porte is in the most urgent want of money, and we may make use of its need to obtain some control over the administration of an important province in Asiatic Turkey."¹⁷ Another proof of this intention is a private letter of Layard to Salisbury. Layard stated that with British experts at the elbows of the *valis*, Britain might be able in time to exercise the sort of control established over the Indian states.¹⁸

Upon Salisbury's dispatch of 8th August, on August 19th, Layard placed a note verbal¹⁹ "in the hands of the Grand Vizier" with respect to the reforms.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Küçük, Cevdet. *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı, 1878-1897*. İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2nd edition, 1986, p. 24.

¹⁷ F.O. 424/74, p. 185, No. 303 in BDOA , Vol. I, No. 90, p. 208.

¹⁸ Medlicott, p. 296.

¹⁹ see YEE 35-35/15-46-95.

After the note verbal of Britain, Layard had an interview with the Sultan (August 27th, 1878) and found him sincere in his intention of executing the reforms. The Sultan stated that he was about to appoint Baker Pasha, an English officer who had been in the Ottoman service for a long time and who was trusted by the Sultan, as a special commissioner to the region. He pleaded the penury of the treasury as an obstacle to his accomplishing the reforms.²¹

Layard's note verbal was submitted to Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükela*) on September 11th. Layard was informed that the provisions had been discussed and accepted in principle.²² However, there was a strong party at the Porte, including the Sultan himself, against the British proposals. The Turco-Russian War had stimulated a general hostility to foreign influences, and Britain's part in the transactions of the last two years had contained ambiguities and disappointments for the Turks.²³ On 5th October, an article in the *Phare du Bosphore*, which was close to the Ottoman official circles, accused Britain of endeavouring to take from the Sultan his sovereign rights in Asia Minor, and was copied by the Turkish newspapers.²⁴

²⁰ Turkey No. 51 (1878), p. 4-5, No. 2 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 83, p. 196-7.

²¹ F.O. 424/73, p. 273, No. 453 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 84, p. 202.

²² F.O. 424/74, p. 166, No. 248 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 86, p. 205.

²³ Medlicott, p. 295.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 294.

On October 24th Layard received an answer to his note verbal²⁵ after long debates in the Council of Ministers.²⁶ In his report to Salisbury, he declared that the palace party opposed his reform proposal. They had tried to persuade the Sultan that to confirm these demands was to surrender and to put the Asiatic territories under a direct British protectorate.²⁷ However, he considered this reply a triumph in the circumstances as many of Salisbury's points were accepted and there was a considerable show of reason when objections were advanced.²⁸ According to the answer of the Porte, employing foreign officers as the commanders of gendarme forces and naming European lawyers as judges in big cities were against the customs (*memleket ve ahalimizin adet ve akhlakina*) of the country. Yet, they could be employed as inspectors of justice and military trainers.²⁹ It was irrational (*muvafik-i akl ve hikmet olamayacagindan*) to suppose the abolishment of *öshür* in whole country, but the Porte was determined to change this system and was willing to try a new system in one or two provinces.³⁰ Governors, judges, and tax collectors were to be appointed for at least five year unless they committed any crime or offence which involved dismissal.³¹ With this answer the Porte put itself under a new pledge

²⁵ F.O. 424/76, p. 33-4, No. 23 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 108, p. 234.

²⁶ YEE 6-1702-82-3 and Küçük, p. 26-8.

²⁷ F.O. 424/76, p. 33-4, No. 23 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 108, p. 235.

²⁸ Medlicott, p. 297.

²⁹ Dahiliye (1295), No. 2809.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

of reforms which would be exploited by Britain against the Ottoman government.

Meanwhile, the Armenians were seized with panic on the withdrawal of the Russians from the region, which started on September 9th.³² Russian withdrawal also caused panic in British diplomatic circles; the Russians encouraged this panic³³ by the employment of agents who were inducing the Armenians to leave the country on Russian withdrawal.³⁴ On September 14th, Layard brought the issue to the Sultan's attention and was promised that an Armenian would be sent to the region as *mutasarraf*, or in some analogous capacity.³⁵ "The most stringent orders" were sent to the governor of Erzurum, Ismail Hakki Pasha, to take every measure for the protection of the Armenians. In reply, the governor stated that tranquillity prevailed in the region and the reports sent about excesses and anticipated massacres were unfounded and greatly exaggerated.³⁶ The appointment of Ali Kemali Pasha was considered, as a commissioner, that is to say "as a kind of political agent, an office which formerly existed in the Turkish Pashalics," to deal with questions connected with the condition and complaints of the Armenians.³⁷ Consequently, Hacı Hüseyin Pasha and Musa

³² Turkey No. 53 (1878), p. 193, No. 204 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 87, p. 205.

³³ F.O. 424/74, p. 185, No. 302 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 89, p. 207.

³⁴ Turkey No. 53 (1878), p. 201-2, No. 214 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 91, p. 209.

³⁵ F.O. 424/74, p. 175, No. 281 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 88, p. 206.

³⁶ F.O. 424/74, p. 246, No. 388 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 94, p. 213.

³⁷ Turkey No. 53 (1878), p. 198, No. 213 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 92, p. 210.

Pasha were sent to Erzurum where they proclaimed martial law in order to provide security for the Christians.³⁸

In October 1878, Layard constantly reported the rumor that Russia was planning to defy the powers and was seeking a pretext to attack Turkey again in order to advance her frontiers in Armenia. What alarmed both Salisbury and Layard was that Russia might obtain the acquiescence of Austria and Germany and by means of a renewed *Dreikaiserbund* feel free to do what she pleased.³⁹ At that time, according to a rumor in circulation the Sultan and the Tsar would sign a secret treaty of alliance depending on the efforts of Lobanoff who was trying to regain something of the position previously held by Ignatiev. "Under the circumstances, Layard felt that he could not push the Sultan too far in respect of reforms, for he might either yield to Russian threats backed by force, or seek an alliance with Russia as the lesser of the two evils."⁴⁰

2- Appointment of British Consuls

In order to keep the events in the region under control, Layard warned his government that a "good Consul should be sent to Erzurum."⁴¹ Tenterden, the British Foreign Under Secretary, called attention to Layard's suggestion and the necessary treasury support was applied

³⁸ Turkey No. 54 (1878), p. 87, No. 112 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 105, p. 230.

³⁹ Lee, p. 152.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ F.O. 424/74, p. 185, No. 302 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 89, p. 207.

for at the beginning of February.⁴² Major H. Trotter, of the Royal Engineers, who had been attached to the Ottoman army in Asia Minor during the war, had already been appointed as consul for Erzurum in October 1878.⁴³ He traveled throughout Anatolia with an Armenian interpreter, Serabien Sebian, and examined the region.⁴⁴

Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson was appointed consul-general in Anatolia with four vice-consuls to assist him: Captain Stewart to Konya, Captain Cooper to Kayseri, Lieutenant-Colonel Villiers to Kastamonu, Lieutenant Chermside to Bursa.⁴⁵ Two other officers, Captain Clayton and Captain Everett were appointed vice-consuls at Van and Erzurum respectively, under Major Trotter.⁴⁶ The consuls were charged with touring the provinces, hearing complaints, observing the activities of the Ottoman governors and of the Kurdish tribes, assisting the Turkish authorities with their advice, remonstrating against all cases of oppression or corruption on the part of the executive and judiciary, watching the introduction of proposed reforms and ensuring their proper and faithful application, and finally reporting all these to the Embassy.⁴⁷ The consul-general, Colonel Wilson, drew the government's attention to the terms of the *berats* "which limited the functions of the consuls to the ordinary

Medlicott, p. 305.

.O. 424/76, p. 28, No. 20 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 108, p. 232.

Angiltere ve Ermeniler, p. 30.

.O. 424/83, p. 498, No. 660/I in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 199, p. 400.

Medlicott, p. 306.

Turkey No. 10 (1879), p. 63, No. 27 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 191, p.

consular duty of watching over the interests of merchants" and demanded extra political power.⁴⁸ However, Layard replied that "the time might come when it might be necessary to insist upon exceptional political powers being given by the Turkish government to Her Majesty's consular officers in the Asiatic territories of the Sultan" but "the time has not yet come to this."⁴⁹ These appointments excited the Armenians with the idea that they, at last, had a European champion.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the presence of British military consuls in the region came across strong opposition from the anti-British party in the Porte. Yahya Pasha, the Ottoman commissioner for the delimitation of the new Russian frontier in Asiatic Turkey, stated that by interfering in every matter, the consuls were practically taking command of the country and were encouraging the Armenians to gain independence.⁵¹

The Armenian Patriarch Nerses was about to resign from his post in January 1879, under the pretext of protesting against the Porte's indifference to the promised reforms.⁵² However, the real reason for his resignation was the clash between the pro-Russian "revolutionary" group and the pro-English "reactionary" group which revealed itself after the late war. After the Treaty of Berlin pro-Russian Armenians accused the

⁴⁸ F.O. 424/84, p. 261-2, No. 300 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 205, p. 413.

⁴⁹ Simsir, p. 15.

⁵⁰ Zeidner, p. 474.

⁵¹ F.O. 424/106, p. 112, No. 58, in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 332, p. 663.

⁵² F.O. 424/79, p. 271, No. 285 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 138, p. 296.

patriarch of being a traitor to the Armenian cause, claiming that the Congress did nothing for them. When the Patriarch later on became certain that Britain would not support the Armenian cause any more he made efforts to regain Abdulhamid's confidence. The Sultan granted him a splendid villa in Ortaköy.⁵³

3- The Change of Government

The Sultan brought Hayreddin Pasha from Tunis and appointed him as Grand Vizier in place of Safvet Pasha. According to Küçük and Lee, basing their judgement on British documents, the reason for Safvet's dismissal was his being passive and clumsy in the introduction of the reforms. The Sultan was planning to get the necessary loans by pleasing Britain with this appointment. However, later developments and the general spirit of Hamidian implementations leads one to consider other reasons for this appointment. This could be one of Abdulhamid's tactics of holding up the issue for a while. Also, for the very first time a Christian, Karatodori Pasha, was appointed to the office of Foreign Secretary. At the same time, Gazi Osman Pasha was appointed to the War Office and "proved to be a thorn in the flesh of both Hayreddin and Layard as he had the ear of the Sultan" and was opposed to all foreign interference in Turkey.⁵⁴ He represented the clique in the Sultan's retinue which

⁵³ İngiltere ve Ermeniler, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Lee, p. 157; Küçük, p. 37.

constantly supported the Sultan's desire to increase his personal authority and safeguard it by a system of spies and secret police.⁵⁵ The appointment of a "liberal" and a "conservative" minister to the cabinet at the same time can not have been a coincidence, but must have been intended to pose an obstacle to the introduction of reforms.

Hayreddin Pasha was known to have liberal ideas, and also seemed to be supporting the reforms.⁵⁶ Being tired of the Sultan's pledges of reform, Salisbury doubted the intention of the Sultan to satisfy any of the British demands except under the compulsion of immediate necessary pressure and was against the view of Layard. According to the British ambassador, the Sultan's intelligence and confidence in Britain were sufficient to ensure the carrying out of the reforms if money and his own guiding hand were not withheld.⁵⁷

4- The First Commission of Reform

According to the British documents the new Grand Vizier chose Akif Pasha, the Vali of Sivas and former Governor-general of Baghdad, and Constant Efendi, the last Christian *Müsteshar* of Bosnia, to be the commissioners of a commission to examine the conditions of the region and to elaborate the scheme of reforms.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Lee, p. 157.

⁵⁶ Küçük, p. 37.

⁵⁷ Medlicott, p. 304.

⁵⁸ F.O. 424/79, p. 323, No. 375 in BDOA , Vol. I, No. 143, p. 303.

However, the commissions were composed of other officials. On May 12th, 1879, the Porte established three commissions: The first was sent to the north, Erzurum and Van, and was composed of the First Commissioner Yusuf Pasha, ex-Minister of Finance, and the Second Commissioner Serkis Efendi; the second was to the south, Diyarbekir, and comprised of Kazim Pasha and Abidin Efendi; and the third was to Halep and Zeytun district. Mazhar Pasha was the chief of this Commission and was assisted by Nuryan Efendi.⁵⁹ Later on, Veysi Pasha was sent by the Porte to join the Halep Commission.⁶⁰ Layard's proposal to appoint a British consul to accompany the commissions was approved by the Grand Vizier;⁶¹ but this council would not hold any official status.⁶² Consequently, Major Trotter was assigned to accompany the first commission and Lieutenant Chermiside to the third.⁶³

The reform commissions, besides meeting European demands for reform, were part of an effort to re-establish Ottoman control in the region, such control having been virtually non-existent since the beginning of the Turco- Russian War. The Kurdish tribes were raiding the Muslim and Armenian peasants, in the cities Muslim notables had asserted almost complete control. Armenians,

⁵⁹ YA-HUS 160/111.

⁶⁰ Turkey No. I (1880), p. 77-82, No. 83/3 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 206, p. 421.

⁶¹ F.O. 424/80, p. 265, No. 317 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 153, p. 324.

⁶² F.O. 424/84, p. 237, No. 282/2, in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 208, p. 444.

⁶³ F.O. 424/83, p. 390, No. 527/I, in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 197, p. 398.

by taking the side of the Russians during the occupation, had proved their disloyalty. The Ottoman administration had no means to alter this situation, however, it was trying to regain its sovereignty by manipulating the Kurds and the Armenians. "The aim was to keep every element weak in order not to challenge the central power."⁶⁴

The commissioners were given instructions about their activities. First of all, they would constitute a commission at once under their own presidency, whose members were to be selected from different communities in numbers proportional to the total number of inhabitants of each community. Under this commission projects of reforms would be elaborated on the basis of new provincial regulations. It would conduct the introduction of the reforms with the help of the governor. As soon as the necessary legislation were completed it would be sent to the Porte for approval.⁶⁵

The commissioners would establish another commission for the introduction of the gendarmery forces on the basis of the gendarmery regulation which was accepted before.⁶⁶

They were authorized to change the old members of the Administrative Council (*Idare Meclisi*) and to replace

Duguid, p. 142.
YA-HUS 160/111.
Ibid.

them by others, to dismiss incompetent and corrupt functionaries.⁶⁷

The general tendency of these instructions was to give large powers to the commissioners, yet, in many instances their power was reduced to nothing as they had to get permission from the Porte wherever increased expenditure was to be incurred. "This proviso at once precluded any steps being taken, without special sanction from the Porte, to organize a gendarmery, or to reorganize the general administration of the country..."⁶⁸ Also, their power was seriously reduced by the telegraphic instructions sent by the Porte since the commission's arrival. Thus, they were reduced to the position of simple inspectors.

The Halep-Zeytun commission selected one Protestant, one Catholic, one Muslim and five Gregorian Armenians in Zeytun as a representative body and decided to divide the district into four *nahiyes*.⁶⁹ The headmen of the 30 communities and villages in the vicinity were summoned and these formed a body of 29 electors (14 Muslim, 15 Christian) who elected 8 of their number as members eligible to the Administrative Council; and from these 8,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ F.O. 424/86, p. 100-3 No. 149, in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 238, p. 499. In a private conversation with the second Commissioner of the Van Commission, Serkis Efendi, Captain Clayton asked what power the commissioners had of introducing reforms without referring to the Porte and he was answered that they had power to remove *kaymakams*, to introduce changes in the system of collecting taxation but that any question involving expenditure must be referred to the Porte; F.O. 424/106, p. 90, No. 47/6, in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 320, p. 623.

⁶⁹ Turkey No. I (1880), p. 77-82, No. 83/3 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 206, p. 419.

4 of them would be elected by the commissioners.⁷⁰ A committee had been appointed under the presidency of an official of the Land Revenue Office (*Emlak Tahrirati Meclisi*), who was considered a fanatic by Lieutenant Chermside, to address the grievances arising from taxation.⁷¹

The commissioners asked for authority to establish a mixed force of rural police under the name of '*harifs*' and invited Zeytun Rüshtü Bey, a member of the Gendarmerie Commission who was in the country on business connected with the establishment of the Circassian emigrants, to assist in the reorganization of the gendarmerie.⁷²

In Halep, a local consultative council met in June and passed a number of sensible and constructive proposals thanks to the freedom of discussion allowed by the commissioners.⁷³

Britain was not content with the deeds of the commissions. British consuls, Henderson and Lieutenant Chermside, who accompanied the Zeytun Commission condemned "the conduct of Mazhar Pasha and treatment of Christians of Zeytun" in a telegram sent to the British Embassy⁷⁴ and made the British Embassy press for Veysi Pasha and Mazhar Pasha's immediate dismissal from the reform commission.⁷⁵ However, the Porte was desperate. The

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 420.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 419.

⁷² Ibid., p. 422.

⁷³ Medlicott, p. 325.

⁷⁴ F.O. 424/85, p. 111-2, No. 446/I in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 226, p. 476.

⁷⁵ Simsir, 21.

Grand Vizier stated that "the Porte was placed in a very difficult position in this way, that no Turkish official would ever be safe or willing to serve, if on the mere complaint or veto of an English agent, who might be misled by interested persons, or who might commit an error in judgment, he was to be recalled or made to undergo some other punishment...It was fair that the accusations brought against the Turkish officials by British agents should first be properly substantiated before the Porte was called upon to act with severity against them."⁷⁶

On June 5th, 1879, Layard protested, with a note verbal, against the failure of the Zeytun Commission to "afford justice and redress to the Christian inhabitants of Zeytun" and on July 13th threatened the Grand Vizier and Minister for Foreign Affairs with the severance of relations with them unless Mazhar Pasha was recalled.⁷⁷ In his report to Sandison, Layard stated that the "conduct of the head of that (Zeytun) commission was a public scandal, and that he had completely lost the respect and confidence of persons of all classes."⁷⁸ Layard added that Veysi Pasha and Mazhar Pasha treated all the Zeytun inhabitants as rebels⁷⁹ and the only measure apparently taken by the Commission was to order the erection of a

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ F.O. 424/85, p. 111-2, No. 446/I in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 226, p. 476.

⁷⁸ F.O. 424/84, p. 241-2, No. 287/I in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 210, p. 450.

⁷⁹ Turkey No. I (1880), p. 77-82, No. 83/3 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 206, p. 439.

large barrack at Zeytun with the object of military occupation.⁸⁰ "Mazhar Pasha has completely identified himself with the interests of the fanatical party at Constantinople. The gross abuse of his extraordinary powers of patronage, and baneful effect of his actions and conduct paralyzed that of the Vali."⁸¹

Likewise, the Second Commissioner Nuryan Efendi was accused by the British Consul Henderson, of being a partisan of France and of supporting the Roman Catholic priests in Syria.⁸²

The imperial commission for the reform of Erzurum and Van arrived in Erzurum in late May, 1879.⁸³ They had received telegraphic orders from the Porte in June 1879, to submit monthly reports of the progress made in Turkish for the Porte, and in French for communication to the ambassadors.⁸⁴ The most important progress they made in three weeks was to establish a sub-committee to discuss the gendarmery reform, whose members would come from each district and be nominated by the Vali.⁸⁵ They also dwelt upon repressing the revolt in Dersim and amongst the Mutki Kurds.⁸⁶ Yusuf Pasha appeared to be keen on introducing the reforms.

⁸⁰ F.O. 424/84, p. 282, No. 216 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 204, p. 412.

⁸¹ F.O. 424/85, p. 206, No. 365 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 228, p. 478.

⁸² F.O. 424/106, p. 194, No. 90 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 338, p. 677.

⁸³ Turkey No. 10 (1879), p. 101, No. 55 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 216, p. 457.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

In preparing to carry out the first instruction which was given to the commissioners by the Porte, namely constitution of a local commission, an important difference of opinion arose between the first and the second commissioners. The First Commissioner Yusuf Pasha affirmed that the number of Muslim and Christian representatives of the commission should be proportional to the total number of Muslims including Turks and Kurds, on the one hand, and the total number of Christians on the other. Second Commissioner Serkis Efendi was against this proposal, claiming that as a large portion of the nomadic Kurds did not pay taxes to the state and failed to contribute to the supply of soldiers, such members of the community had no right to representation, and therefore that these elements should be excluded from calculation. According to the direction of the Porte on the clashing views of the commissioners, the original instructions were to be carried out.⁸⁷ The commissioners called a consultative council, comprising 38 members, 10 Christians and 28 Muslims, from amongst the non-official inhabitants of the city of Erzurum. Also, a sub-commission was established to investigate the events in Geghi district. According to Trotter, "the idea of such a parliament ever coming to any satisfactory practical conclusions in a reasonable time was almost too absurd to waste a thought on."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Turkey No. 4 (1880), p. 1-3, No. 1 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 221, p. 467.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

The Commission found the situation at Mush "complete anarchy"⁸⁹ The troops were even worse than the Kurds.⁹⁰ There had been movements of troops as a consequence of their dismissal to their homes and on their marches they ill-treated the peasants, demanding provision and cash.⁹¹

The Erzurum-Van Commission had made several proposals to the Porte but did not receive any answer to most of them. The proposal of the opening of postal and direct telegraphic communication between Erzurum and Van and direct postal communication between Erzurum, Erzincan and Harput was not answered by the Porte. The proposal of exempting the village communities from taxation on account of supplies provided for the army during the war also did not receive an answer.⁹² The proposal of extension of the latest date for accepting *kaime* in payment of ancient debts due to the government, and the proposal of the Reform Commission to change the members of *Idare Meclisi* were accepted by the Porte. The proposal regarding a new gendarmery was to be submitted for consultation to the Diyarbekir Reform Commission which had proposed a scheme for that province by which an efficient gendarmery was to be introduced without increased expenditure.⁹³

⁸⁹ F.O. 424/106, p. 31, No. 13/5 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 326, p. 640.

⁹⁰ F.O. 424/106, p. 90, No. 47/6 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 320, p. 623.

⁹¹ Turkey No. 23 (1880), p. 23-4, No. 19/3 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 319, p. 621.

⁹² F.O. 424/86, p. 100-3 No. 149 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 238, p. 501.

⁹³ Ibid.

Lack of mutual cooperation between the Vali Fosfor Mustafa Pasha, ex-Minister of War, and the first Commissioner Yusuf Pasha, also prevented progress in the execution of the reforms.⁹⁴ "The want of support from Constantinople, together with the very lukewarm aid given by the Vali, has had a very perceptible effect of cooling down the energy and ardor with which the commissioners commenced their labors."⁹⁵

On July 20th, 1879, Layard addressed to the Porte a note verbal urging the desirability of employing European officers in the organization of the gendarmery for the province of Erzurum to prevent the "ill-treatment and oppression of the Christian population by the local Mussulman Chiefs"⁹⁶ and for the very first time, on 29th July, pressed the appointment of Baker Pasha to a high command in *Kurdistan*.⁹⁷ According to the British government the most important point of the reforms was the independent command of gendarmery to a European officer; "without it all would fail."⁹⁸ But, as the Porte had more urgent problems like the Greek frontier issue and Egypt, the Armenian question was of less importance that time.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ F.O. 424/106, p. 90, No. 47/6 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 320, p. 623.

⁹⁵ F.O. 424/86, p. 100-3, No. 149 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 238, p. 502.

⁹⁶ F.O. 424/85, p. 325, No. 515 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 234, p. 489.

⁹⁷ F.O. 424/85, p. 349, No. 149 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 240, p. 506.

⁹⁸ F.O. 424/89, p. 62, No. 75 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 293, p. 589.

⁹⁹ See F.O. 424/85, p. 251-2, No. 420 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 236, p. 495 and F.O. 424/86, p. 144-7, No. 197 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 241, p. 511.

The struggle between Osman and Hayreddin Pashas resulted in the resignation of the latter on 28th July, 1879. Aarifi Pasha was appointed as Grand Vizier and Safvet Pasha as foreign minister.¹⁰⁰ They remained in their posts for three months.

5- Military Encounter With Britain (*Donanma Meselesi*)

On October 13th, 1879, the Sultan changed the members of the cabinet and appointed Küçük Said Pasha as Prime Minister. The appointment of Kamil Pasha as undersecretary (Müsteshar) of the Ministry of Interior was not welcomed by Britain. His appointment was also resented by both Savvas and Said Pashas.¹⁰¹

The Sultan also recalled Mahmut Nedim Pasha from exile and appointed him to the Ministry of the Interior. He was known to be a pro-Russian and a former friend of Ignatiev.¹⁰² Rumors about Nedim's appointment to this high post had spread in Istanbul as early as June. Upon the instruction of Salisbury, Layard sent a message to the Sultan that Nedim's appointment to a high post "must necessarily bring about an entire change in the policy of Britain as regards Turkey."¹⁰³

This change was considered to be "deplorable" and an incline towards Russia¹⁰⁴ by Britain and led them to

¹⁰⁰ Medlicott, p. 320-1.

¹⁰¹ F.O. 424/89, p. 80, No. 257 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 302, p. 597.

¹⁰² Küçük, p. 49. The Pasha was called "Nedimof" by his opponents.

¹⁰³ Medlicott, p. 318.

¹⁰⁴ Küçük, p. 50.

insist on the reforms.¹⁰⁵ On October 22nd, Layard pressed the Porte for the implementation of the reforms using the "strongest language" to the new Prime Minister. He threatened Said Pasha that unless the reforms were put into effect without delay and Christians of Asia Minor received full protection and their rights, Britain could no longer support Turkey; and warned him that the Sultan's throne and Empire would be in "immediate danger."¹⁰⁶

Upon these events, on 25th October, the British fleet at Malta was ordered to proceed to Ottoman waters. This caused panic in the Palace. The Sultan sent a message to Layard and implied that he would appeal to Russia unless the British fleet withdrew.¹⁰⁷ Layard stated that he was ignorant of this mobilization and would obtain information about it as soon as possible.¹⁰⁸ Layard was also surprised at this maneuver and found it too severe. He used conciliatory language and stated to the Grand Vizier that this must not be taken as a hostile action. It was the result of British party politics "to close the mouths of the Gladstonians'."¹⁰⁹

This event increased Abdulhamid's irritation against Britain. According to the Sultan this was a violation of

¹⁰⁵ F.O. 424/88, p. 166, No. 232 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 270, p. 570.

¹⁰⁶ F.O. 424/88, p. 232-3, No. 289 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 274, p. 575.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ YA-HUS 162/97.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

his sovereign rights and he stated that he should "certainly seek the means of defending his Empire."¹¹⁰

Musurus Pasha, the Ottoman ambassador to London, promised Salisbury that there should be no change in the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire, that reforms should be introduced without delay, and that Baker Pasha should be appointed to an independent command of the gendarmery.¹¹¹ The following day Abdulhamid promised to come to a satisfactory understanding upon the reforms with Britain if the British fleet were to be called back.¹¹² The Sultan said that Britain was very hard upon him, even much more so than Russia, and that British demands and pretensions were such that he could not, consistent with his independence and dignity, yield to them.¹¹³

In return for the promises of the Ottoman government Britain did not send her fleet¹¹⁴ and pledged to get Ottoman permission before any naval mobilization in Ottoman waters.¹¹⁵ However, Layard warned the Sultan that the British government would not be satisfied unless Baker Pasha was given an independent command in "Armenia" or in some disturbed district where he could be of real

¹¹⁰ F.O. 424/88, p. 310, No. 416 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 281, p. 581.

¹¹¹ Medlicott, p. 331.

¹¹² F.O. 424/88, p. 314, No. 427 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 283, p. 582.

¹¹³ F.O. 424/90, p. 68-9, No. 96 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 317, p. 616.

¹¹⁴ YA-HUS 162/108.

¹¹⁵ YA-HUS 162/123.

use.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Britain was ready to seek the employment of another European officer in addition to Baker Pasha.¹¹⁷

The Ottoman government took some measures concerning the reforms in order to impress the British government. Said Pasha's recommendations in the Zeytun affair were accepted by the Council of Ministers¹¹⁸ and the Armenian prisoners were released through the efforts of the Zeytun Commission.¹¹⁹ The Armenian brigands were amnestied in November 1879.¹²⁰ On November 14th, the Sultan issued an *irade* authorizing the immediate implementation of the reforms recommended by the Council of Ministers. After these steps, Lord Salisbury stated that for the present the fleet should not move into Turkish waters, but he could not promise anything for the future; and he could give no undertaking that Britain would abstain from active measures if nothing were done to satisfy the promises which the government of the Sultan had given.¹²¹

6- The Second Commission of Reform

Baker Pasha was invited to the palace on 8th November to discuss with others a scheme for the reorganization of the Ottoman army prepared by the Sultan's French adviser Dreyse.¹²² Süleyman Bey and Mehmed Said Pasha, the

¹¹⁶ F.O. 424/89, p. 80, No. 117 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 297, p. 591.

¹¹⁷ F.O. 424/89, p. 69, No. 100 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 296, p. 591.

¹¹⁸ F.O. 424/89, p. 55, No. 56 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 287, p. 585.

¹¹⁹ F.O. 424/89, p. 225, No. 269 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 308, p. 601.

¹²⁰ Simsir, p. 21.

¹²¹ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 8-12, No. 5 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 5 p.

¹²² 19.
Medlicott, p. 332.

Mutasarrif of Thessaly, Colonel Shakir (in whom Baker had great confidence), Colonel Tahir (formerly connected with the British police service in India), Captain Shakir (of Greek origin), and Lieutenant Yusuf were assigned accompany to Baker Pasha in his mission.¹²³ Mehmed Said's appointment was also welcomed by the British government.¹²⁴

Baker Pasha left for Alexandretta on 29th November but he was not given any instructions under the pretext that they were not quite ready. The instructions would be brought by Süleyman Bey a day or two days later.¹²⁵ The delay was probably to prevent Layard from seeing the instructions before Baker's departure.¹²⁶

The reform commission was welcomed (*kemal-i tantana ve debdebe ile*) at Aleppo both by the Governor Said Pasha and by the Christians of the city. Baker made several confidential interviews with the governor and the British consul. This was considered by the reporter, Süleyman Pasha, to be against the interests of the state as the governor was acting as an agent of the British consul.¹²⁷ The governor was never trusted by the Turkish members of the commission. He was considered a frivolous (*hafifü'l meshreb*) man and an admirer of French culture (*frengiyü'l etvar*). He was not suitable for the post, as the

¹²³ YEE 14-2335/1-126-11.

¹²⁴ Turkey No. 4 (1880), p. 163, No. 124 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 313, p. 608.

¹²⁵ Medlicott, p. 339.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ YEE 14-2335/1-126-11, p. 1.

population of Aleppo consisted of pious Arabs.¹²⁸ His dismissal was forcefully recommended to the Porte.¹²⁹

The commission went to Birecik, Urfa, Siverek, Diyarbekir, Harput, Keban, Sivas, Karahisar-i Sharki, Erzincan, and Erzurum. The people of Urfa were peaceful and loyal to the state. But because of the clash of two Kurdish tribes Christians and other subjects were in the habit of fleeing to the mountains.¹³⁰

Baker and Mehmed Said Pashas arrived in Diyarbekir on January 19th, 1880. This commission also had no administrative powers. This was understood by the public when the Imperial *Firman* was read in the *Meclis* and inhabitants ceased to take much interest in the matter.¹³¹ The deeds of the Armenian priests at Diyarbekir were quite disturbing to the commissioners. The patriarchate acted as an embassy in the region, and the clerics as its consuls. They excited the Armenians towards independence.¹³²

Baker Pasha sent many reports to the Porte which were regarded as useful.¹³³ He was in communication also with Layard. He sent a confidential letter to Layard including his view of the issue. However, Layard wanted this communication to remain secret in order not to get the Pasha into trouble. Baker suspected that the

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.7.

¹³¹ F.O. 424/106, p. 183-4, No. 87 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 332, p. 663.

¹³² Ibid., p. 10-11.

¹³³ YA-HUS 164-66.

"exceedingly anti-English,"¹³⁴ Süleyman Bey who was raised on the occasion to the rank of Pasha, had a telegraphic cipher and was constantly informing the Porte about his activities.¹³⁵ However, as we notice in the Ottoman documents Mehmed Said Pasha had the cipher and Baker was right that his activities were being reported.¹³⁶

Baker reported that the new regulations for the tribunals were beginning to work but civil and criminal procedures should be discriminated properly. He could not get a definite basis for the organization of the gendarmery. "The provisional reorganization sent out some five months ago was a mere sham and the so called new force was already two or three months in arrears of pay."

7- Parliamentary Elections in Britain and the Shift in Ottoman Policy

The conviction of the Sultan that his own safety and the existence of his empire would be best secured by the alliance with Britain, even if Britain proved at times both a hectoring and an inactive ally,¹³⁷ continued until the general elections in Britain.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 2-8, No. 3 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 354, p. 725.

¹³⁵ F.O. 424/106, p. 201-2, No. 94/1 in BDOA, Vol. I, No. 340, p. 687.

¹³⁶ YA-HUS 163/93.

¹³⁷ Medlicott, p. 315.

¹³⁸ The Porte was anxious about the change of government which took place in Britain. Abidin Pasha stated to Goschen that "at first when the (Cyprus) Convention was made he rejoiced on behalf of his country and considered that the guarantee of the remaining Asiatic dominions of Turkey by a power like Britain compensated, in a very large measure, the losses of territory they had incurred on that continent" but "since the change of government and since he read the speeches which had been made on the subject, he had

In the elections the Liberal Party under the leadership of Gladstone came to power and Disraeli suffered defeat. One of the first actions of Gladstone was to recall the "pro-Turkish ambassador" Layard from Istanbul. On May 6th, 1880, George Goschen, Member of Parliament for Ripon,¹³⁹ was appointed to Istanbul as the British Special Ambassador, with the requisite full powers and credentials,¹⁴⁰ in order to impress the Porte by giving "the opportunity of learning from a Special Ambassador how grave Her Majesty's Government considered the present situation of affairs in the Ottoman Empire, and their determination to insist, in concert with the other Powers, upon the complete fulfillment by the Porte of its obligations under the Treaty of Berlin with respect to Greece, Montenegro and Armenia."¹⁴¹

Goschen's appointment was at first resisted by the Porte as it was thought that his mission was to introduce a financial system similar to Egypt's. Earle Granville, the new British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, assured the Porte that Goschen had no financial mission. Musurus Pasha also reported that during his membership of the Parliament Goschen did not advocate an anti-Ottoman

doubted whether Turkey had gained the advantage of the (Cyprus) Convention. In reply Goschen declared that the Porte did not fulfill any of its promises and added that Baker Pasha had no executive powers and qualified men to deal with existing evils and abuses were absent; F.O. 424/107, p. 9-10, No. 10 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 22, p. 88.

¹³⁹ Walker, p. 123.

¹⁴⁰ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 8-12, No. 5 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 5, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 8, No. 4 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 2, p. 4-5).

policy.¹⁴² However, according to the report of a certain Riza Bey at the Porte who paid a visit to London, Musurus Pasha was being too optimistic about the British government and the real intention was to bring the Greek, Montenegrin and Armenian issues to a conclusion.¹⁴³

Holding the belief that only the exercise of a united pressure could persuade the Porte, Earl Granville invited the Powers to address an identical and simultaneous note to the Porte, requesting the Turkish government to fulfill its treaty obligations with regard to Greece, Montenegro and to the Asian provinces (May 4th, 1880)¹⁴⁴ and to call the Porte to state explicitly what steps had been taken.¹⁴⁵ Goschen's consultations with the representatives of the other signatories of the Berlin Treaty resulted in the addressing to the Porte of the note verbal of June 11th, 1880.¹⁴⁶

Upon his order, the Sultan was presented with a report which included those reforms which had been inaugurated and those which had been not. According to the report the Porte was also in favor of reforms. However, the reforms could not be introduced exclusively to the eastern Anatolian provinces, but to the whole country.¹⁴⁷ The reform project prepared for Rumeli would

¹⁴² YEE 35-37/I-138.

¹⁴³ YEE 35-37/12-138.

¹⁴⁴ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 1-2, No. 2 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 1, p. 3-4.

¹⁴⁵ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 8-12, No. 5 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 5, p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ YA-HUS 164/83.

¹⁴⁷ YA-HUS 164/120.

be reviewed and reshaped according to the conditions of the region.¹⁴⁸

The reply of the Porte, which was dated July 5th, was not considered satisfactory by the powers. The Porte listed the measures taken and expressed its regrets at the exaggeration of some judicial cases.¹⁴⁹ Depending on the report of Abidin Pasha, Governor-general of Sivas, the Porte considered introducing the system of *communes*. According to this system *kazas* would be subdivided into communes, consisting of seven or eight villages grouped together with the idea of bringing together villages of one religion as far as possible. Where Armenians were in majority a Christian *müdür* (headman) would be selected by the population and this *müdür* would have a small number of "village police" for the service of the commune raised among the inhabitants.¹⁵⁰

The British government approved Goschen's proposal to draw up and present to the Grand Vizier a note recapitulating the worst cases "of abuse, anarchy, miscarriage of justice and insecurity of life and property in Anatolia."¹⁵¹ On September 7th the ambassadors gave a collective note verbal to the Porte pointing out that the Ottoman proposal did not meet either the spirit or the letter of the Treaty of Berlin.¹⁵² In this note the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ YEE 35-35/19-46-95.

¹⁵⁰ F.O. 424/106, p. 486-7, No. 238 in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 15, p. 43.

¹⁵¹ F.O. 424/107, p. 11, No. 14 in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 26, p. 99.

¹⁵² YEE 35-2334-50-97; Turkey No. 23 (1880), p. 279-82, No. 154/1 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 32, p. 119.

Powers sought to exclude the Kurds from the reforms intended for "Armenia" and give them a separate administration.¹⁵³ According to them the sedentary Armenians and the semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes could not be governed in the same manner.¹⁵⁴

On October 3rd, 1880, the note of September 7th was answered by the Porte. However, the course of the negotiations respecting the Greek frontier question showed that a joint action on the part of the Powers would not take place till the next September, thus, the British government agreed to defer any representations to be made to the Porte about the issue.¹⁵⁵ In the meantime, Goschen was recalled in May 1881 and Lord Dufferin was appointed to the post to "extort" reforms from the Sultan. However, Dufferin himself preferred persuasion to extortion.¹⁵⁶

On September 9th, 1881, the ambassadors met at the invitation of Dufferin and decided to address another note to the Foreign Minister, reinforcing the suggestions and demands embodied in the note of September 7th, 1880. They concluded that they would propose the introduction of a High Commissioner for the implementation of the reforms, and they had two names in their minds: Muhtar and Rauf Pashas.¹⁵⁷ Rauf Pasha was considered to be a

¹⁵³ Salt, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Turkey No. 23 (1880), p. 279-82, No. 154/1 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 32, p. 120.

¹⁵⁵ F.O. 424/122, p. 56, No. 33. in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 61, p. 195.

¹⁵⁶ Salt, 52.

¹⁵⁷ F.O. 424/123, p. 160-3, No. 113. in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 110, p. 307).

fitter person for the post, as being "very conciliatory and less fanatical, and more tolerant a Mussulman than Muhtar, who, however, was a very clever man, and had a greater knowledge of the country than Rauf."¹⁵⁸

On October 4th, 1881, the ambassadors entrusted to Dufferin and Novikoff the task of drafting a scheme of reforms, founded on the recommendations made by Sir Charles Wilson and Major Trotter. The scheme was submitted to a conference of the ambassadors on February 9th, 1882, and received their acceptance.¹⁵⁹ However, Germany refused to act in concert with other European powers. In January 1882 an Ottoman delegation, composed of Mehmet Reshit Bey and Ali Nizami Pasha, paid a visit to Berlin in order to award a medal to the German Emperor.¹⁶⁰ During the negotiations both parties' intention of a treaty of alliance were revealed. The Ottoman delegation asked for the assistance of German officials. Bismarck anticipated the future Turkish policy during these negotiations. He continually advised the delegates that the Ottoman state should rely on its Turkish and Muslim subjects.¹⁶¹ The Christians had proved their disloyalty on many occasions and the Ottomans should govern them with a "lion's claw that wore a silk glove."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ F.O. 424/123, p. 177, No. 129. in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 118, p. 318.

¹⁵⁹ F.O. 424/132, p. 50-1, No. 37. in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 168, p. 401.

¹⁶⁰ YEE 14-74/2-126-7

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Germany was conscious that Ottoman Empire had no supporter in the European political arena, and tried to make use of this lack for her imperialistic causes. Bismarck advised "In a dispatch from Berlin on May 1883 the British ambassador, Lord Ampthill, noted that Bismarck was basically prepared to act in concert with the other Powers. Over one question, however, he could not follow Britain: the Armenian Question. He claimed that the constant pressure on the Sultan humiliated him in the eyes of his subjects, and weakened him in the eyes of his enemies; besides, interference with the happiness of other sovereigns' subjects was philanthropy, and he hated philanthropy in politics."¹⁶³

Austrian policy ran along the same line as the German one. Bismarck stated that any treaty signed with Austria meant that it was signed also with Germany.¹⁶⁴ Austrian diplomats informed their British colleagues on many occasions that Austria did not have any direct interest in the subject.¹⁶⁵ Austria was obviously trying to protect her improving relations with the Ottoman Empire.

8- Recovery of Sovereignty

In October 1878, the Porte promised to place some foreign officers on the Central Council of the Gendarmerie and to employ them in that force when constituted, to

¹⁶³ Walker, p. 124.

¹⁶⁴ YEE 14-74/2-126-7.

¹⁶⁵ F.O. 424/140, p. 29-30, No. 36 in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 208, p. 167; F.O. 424/140, p. 81, No. 84 in BDOA, Vol. II, No. 224, p. 190.

appoint some foreign lawyers to superintend the Tribunals, and to introduce, with the assistance of foreign functionaries, a new system of tax collection to supersede öshür. The governors of provinces, magistrates, and receivers of revenue should be immune from dismissal except for misconduct, and should be appointed for at least five years. However, little was done towards the execution of these promises. The Porte appointed foreign inspectors of finance, but they did not have real authority and thus, two Englishmen resigned from the job. The Porte also appointed judicial inspectors for the provinces, but this measure aggravated the situation.¹⁶⁶ According to the reports of Layard, the rule of retaining the *Valis* in their posts for a fixed period had been broken, and no efficient steps had been taken for the proper organization of the gendarmery.¹⁶⁷ According to the dispatches of May 1880, the English officers who had been engaged to proceed to Turkey to organize the gendarmery, but whose employment had always been steadily opposed by Osman Pasha and the 'retrograde party' at the Palace, remained without position or pay and were about to be sent back to Britain.¹⁶⁸ Consequently, the network of British military consuls was relinquished in 1885 as it was found to be unproductive.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Turkey No. 7 (1880), p. 8-12, No. 5 in BDOA, Vol II, No. 5 p. 19.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Zeidner, p. 475.

The most important obstacle to the application of the reforms noted by the Sultan was the lack of funds. The Sultan had many times asked for British help to obtain a loan. However, there was no hope of guaranteeing a loan to the Porte "because of the temper of the Parliament, whose members believed that Britain's financial obligations were already too great and that Turkey was unworthy of confidence."¹⁷⁰ In return for Layard's appeals for help, Salisbury advised Turkey to be "her own friend in matters of finance."¹⁷¹

The Sultan was busy with other problems like the trial of Mithat Pasha and his colleagues which caused the utmost trouble for him.¹⁷²

The Sultan was inclined to establish a despotic administration after the British general elections of 1880. Ottoman expectations of British support against the Russian threat expired as the anti-Ottoman Gladstone's victory meant the preference of a Russian alliance by the British people. There was no need to seem to be in cooperation with Britain any more. In 1881 censorship paralyzed the Ottoman press and to exert control over internal travels, the internal passport (*mürur tezkeresi*) was strictly enforced.¹⁷³ However, after the occupation of Egypt by Britain, Tsar Alexander III, who succeeded to the

¹⁷⁰ Lee, p. 152.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² F.O. 424/123, p. 66A-66B, No. 40. in *BDQA*, Vol. II, No. 84, p. 263.

¹⁷³ Aksin, Sina (ed.). *Türkiye Tarihi*. Vol. 3. Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992, p. 164.

throne after the assassination of the "liberal" Alexander II by *narodniks*, wooed the Porte constantly. This gave the Sultan a free hand to combat the English pressure.¹⁷⁴ The new Tsar had not only canceled Melikof's Armenian project, but launched the policy of Russification of his Armenian subjects as well.¹⁷⁵

With the invasion of Egypt, Britain secured the Indian route on the most sound basis and the Armenian Question became less important for Britain. This can be observed by the decrease in the number of the British documents about the issue. There are hundreds of documents referring to this matter from the previous years, but, for the year 1884 only fourteen and for 1885 five British documents exist in Simsir's compilation of British documents on the issue. After 1883 all of the documents are about mere instances concerning the Armenian population in the region. The *Blue Books* of the British government on the Armenian Question disappeared in 1881 and did not reappear until 1889. These compiled documents of British diplomacy had been published after few months from the date of the last document, in order to inform the public. However, in 1884, only one Blue Book was published, and even then was distributed only inside the parliament¹⁷⁶ which shows the Liberal governments' 'failure' on the issue.

¹⁷⁴ Zeidner, p. 481.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 475.

¹⁷⁶ Walker, p. 125.

In the 1880s European powers were deeply concerned with their own domestic and imperialistic affairs. In 1881 France occupied Tunis, in 1882 Britain occupied Egypt. Germany was reforging her hegemony over the continent by means of the Dual Alliance with Austria in 1879, the revival of the League of the Three Emperors in 1881, and the creation of the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria and Italy in 1882.¹⁷⁷

Moreover, in the 1880s continental Great Powers had conservative governments and they were not in a mood to sympathize with the revolutionary Armenian aims. Bismarck was in trouble with the marxist Social Democrat Party. In Russia, Alexander II's successor Alexander III showed no mercy to the revolutionists.¹⁷⁸

Thus, in the 1880s increasingly conflicting imperial and commercial interests of the European states in the Ottoman Empire prevented joint action on the issue and gave the Sultan a free hand to deal with the Armenian Question and restore his sovereignty.

¹⁷⁷ Yale, p. 124.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Between 1878 and 1885, the Armenian Question reappeared in these forms: as a political squabble between the Liberals and the Conservatives in the British Parliament, a clash between the nomadic Kurds and sedentary Armenians, an effort by the British government to dominate the Ottoman government, and most importantly, an international clash between Russia and Britain.

The pattern of exploitation of the Armenian Question as a reflection of party politics found its most clear expression in the statement of William Summers, a liberal Member of Parliament: "Gladstone and I are involved in the Armenian Question for the sole purpose of causing difficulties to the Salisbury Cabinet."¹ Hence, under the pretext of "humanitarian intervention" the Armenian problem became subordinate to domestic British politics.

The assimilation of the Kurds, who could counterbalance the Armenian revolutionary movement, into the Ottoman system was more important for the Porte than introducing reforms for the benefit of the Armenians. Abdulhamid's policy supported the Kurds against the Armenians, a fact which became obvious with the emergence of the Hamidiye Regiments.

¹ Dadrian, p. 63.

The only possibility for the execution of the reforms was foreign pressure, which could not be effective because of the clashing interests of the Powers. After the occupation of Egypt by Britain, Russia turned her face to Turkey and the essential fear of the Porte that Anatolia would disintegrate terminated.

For the Armenians' part, the Armenian leadership made several miscalculations. They underestimated the international realities of the time, namely the Russo-British rivalry over the region. Their misfortune compared to their fellow Christians in the Balkans, I think, was not their being a minority in the region, as suggested by some writers, but was the region's strategical importance.

One may consider that a nation's revolt can not be reduced to the deeds of imperialist powers. Certainly, the origins of Armenian nationalism is older than the Turco-Russian War, however, the Armenian Question emerged at least as a geographical issue after this dispute. The immediate disappearance of the question from the international fora after the British occupation of Egypt provides proof of this thesis.

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